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PRIESTLY AVARICE:

OR, THE

Clergy's Kingdom of this World.

A

Visitation Sermon,

PREACH'D AT

HALSTEAD in ESSEX.

By EDWARD SYMONDS, Minister of
RATNE in ESSEX.

L O N D O N,

Printed: And Sold by J. Roberts in Warwick-Lane.

M DCC XXXI.

[Price 6 d.]



T O

Those to whom it may belong.

REVEREND SIRs,

FOrasmuch as it has pleas'd Almighty God of his great Goodness, to bless this Age with an incomparable Set of wise and able Ministers, to do the Service both of Church and State; and seeing that the Superior Clergy are more especially remarkable for their uncommon Humility and Self-denial, Application to their proper Business, and Watchfulness over their Sheep, We can by no means conceive that the following Discourse, which inveighs against Ecclesiastical Avarice and Self-seeking, can be properly address'd to any one living. But if ever it shou'd please Heaven (for the Sins of this Nation) to visit us hereafter with Wolves in Sheeps Attire, To them the subsequent Reproof appertains.

If we shou'd ever unfortunately have a Prelate amongst us, who shall concern himself with the State, instead of the Church, study the Law more than the Gospel, and seek the earthly Tabernacle of *Canterbury* and its Revenues, before the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness; who shall endeavour to crush every one of his inferior Clergy: Who has more wit than is agreeable to his solemn Grimace, or more Spirit than to submit to his Ecclesiastical Nod, To the Perusal of such a one We wou'd recommend the ensuing Discourse.

If we shou'd ever have another of those Right Reverend Gentry, who shall make Money his God, and pay Adoration to the *Golden Image*, who shall always make his Principle truckle to his Profit, and plead the Cause of *Bribery* and *Corruption* for Hire: If any one that shall regard the Interest of his own private Family, more than the Edification of the Flocks under his Care; who shall measure a Man's Merit by his *Matrimonial*

Election, and tag a *Daughter* or a *Niece* to every Benefit he bestows. — If any other that shall turn Monopolizer of Dignities and Livings, receive the Wages of a Bishop, Priest and Deacon at once, without discharging the Duty of either, and hold *Commendam* on *Commendam*, whilst many Gentlemen of superior Understanding and Merit are starving in a Gown; — If any stingy, imperious *Double-Chinn'd Doctor*, with two or three fat Livings, and half a Dozen *Sine-Cures*, shall keep a *tatter'd Crape* to do the Drudgery of Prayer, without allowing him a Stipend sufficient to get him Bread, and treat him with less Respect than he does his Sexton or Lacquey, To such as these we make a Present of the following Rebuke.

In a Word, if any, by whatever Names or Titles dignify'd and distinguish'd, shall hereafter act in such a selfish and worldly-minded manner as shall prove them to be Seekers of their own Things, and not of Christ's. — If, instead of taking up the Cross, and following their Master, they make it their sole Business to contend for the Bag, and, *Judas* like, betray his Interest for a Bribe — If, instead of being Peace-makers and Reconcilers amongst Men, there should be any who shall become Authors and Fomenters of Discord, who to gratify their own Avarice, Ambition and Pride, shall turn Disturbers of Kingdoms and Butchers of Men, and set the World in a Flame that they may pilfer in the Confusion, To these, and to such as these, we address the following Discourse.

But here it may be asked, If we have no such Wayward Divines amongst us at present, to what End is this Satire trump'd up again now? — Hey! Why, ay that's true — But — but — but look'e that's not the Thing. If People will ask silly Questions, they may answer 'em themselves for Us. — And so, Reverend Brethren, and Right Reverend Fathers, we greet you well.

A, B, C, D, &c.

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PHIL. II. 21.

*For all seek their own, not the things which are
Jesus Christ's.*

CHRIST is the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, so stit'd, 1 Pet. ii. the last Verse : Now his Diocess extends over all the World, and consists in the general of two sorts of People, *Jews* and *Gentiles* ; over each of which he did appoint *nominatim* a special Superintendant, Gal. ii. 7. *Peter* was for the *Jews*, whatsoever the Papists say, and *Paul* was for the *Gentiles*, whereof the *Philippians*, a People of *Macedon* in *Greece*, were a part ; towards whom (like a loving Guardian) this their Supervisor *St. Paul* doth manifest his special Care, in providing for them, and sending to them, to be resident with them, a most learned, loving, faithful, and self-denying Man ; one *Timotheus*, a young Man with whom himself was well acquainted, and whose Conditions he so well knew, that he durst give his word for him, and pawn his Credit that he would be most sincere in the Work of Christ, and most loving unto them ; nay, the truth was, he did not know where to find his Fellow, he was the best in the whole pack : for (says he) I have no Man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state ; *for all seek their own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's.*

Now, Brethren, as we go along, we may note by the way these few things.

First,

First, That there was an Order of Superiours and Inferiours in the Church in the Apostle's days: *Paul* hath Power over *Timothy*, for to send him, *ver. 19.* and *Timothy* was ready to obey *Paul*, as a Son the Father, *ver. 22.*

Secondly, We may observe, that it did (as may seem) chiefly belong to the Bishop or Supervisor, to appoint Pastors for particular Churches and Congregations: *Paul* sends and appoints *Timothy* to be a Preacher to the *Philippians*.

Thirdly, We may observe what kind of Men were prefer'd by them to such places: why such as themselves by experience knew to be learned, loving, faithful, and self-denying; yea, and such of whose Condition the People themselves were not altogether ignorant: for such a one was *Timothy* in all these respects, as shall appear.

1. He was a learned Man, and that not in the Rabbins or Schoolmen only, but in the Scriptures; he was a good Textuary, as may be seen, *2 Tim. iii. 15.* instructed in the Scriptures from a Child.

2. He was a loving Man, one that would naturally care for their state, even as tho' they were ally'd to him by nature, *ver. 20.*

3. He was one that was no Self-seeker, but faithful for Christ, as appears by the Text, with that which goes before: I have no Man like-minded, *for all these seek their own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's*; as (who say) *Timothy* is a Man *per se*, one that seeks not himself in any thing, but only the Glory of God in every thing.

4. He was one of whose Honesty and Sincerity the *Philippians* themselves had proof, as well as the Apostle (or else it might be question'd whether he would have plac'd him over them:) *Ye know* (says he) *ye know the proof of him, that like as a Son with the Father, he serv'd with me in the Gospel*; *ver. 22.* It seems he had dwelt with the Apostle (not like a Trencher-Chaplain to say Grace and so forth, till a living fell) but says he, *he serv'd with me in the Gospel*: that is, he and I went preaching the Word of God up and down together; as if some good Bishop and his Chaplain should go up and down to every Church in the Diocese (as both their Duty and Custom of old was) and preach the Word of God together, the one in the Forenoon, and the other in the Afternoon.

Now the *Philippians* by these means had some proof and knowledge of *Timothy*; they had heard him preach, and had seen his Faithfulness, his Zeal, and his Scholarship; and therefore the Apostle knew they could not disallow of him, especially too being commended to them upon his Approbation. I leave the Application of these things to your selves, and fall upon the Text; *For*, says the Apostle, *all seek their own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's.*

The words are an *Ætiologia*, or rendring of a reason, why he sent *Timothy* unto them; and it is a Collation, from the comparing of him with others, wherein he prefers him before them. None were altogether of so perfect a stamp, nor of so pure a Metal, so wholly sincere in the Work of Christ as *Timothy* was; they were a little more tainted with Self-Infection, somewhat more *Self-seeking* than he.

Whence we may observe, who amongst many is to be prefer'd *ad Curam Animarum*, by them that have power thereunto; even such as they think in conscience, upon good experience, will aim most directly at God's Glory, and at the Salvation of Men. Favour, Friendship, base Simony, Flattery, Affection and the like, must bear no sway, but naked Sincerity alone must poise the Balance.

All seek their own.] There be divers degrees of Sincerity amongst God's Servants; no doubt but St. Paul had many more under him, that were sincere too for the Glory of Christ: but Timothy was sincere in the highest degree, he went beyond them all, and therefore shall be prefer'd before them all.

Or it may be, this universal Proposition is but Hyperbolical, and taken for the most part; as that place, *John* iii. 32. speaking of Christ, it is said, *No Man received his Testimony*: that is, no body to speak on. Why, the Disciples did, and some few others did, that were his Followers; yea, but they were no body to speak on, in respect of them that receiv'd it not. So here, no body but Timothy seeks that which is Jesus Christ's; yes, *Epaphroditus* did, of whom mention is made, *ver.* 25. and some others doubtless: yea, but alas they are no body to speak on, in respect of the rest, that are more Christ's in shew than they are in substance; and (if you please) let us take the words in that sense, which is indeed the most favourable Interpretation.

And I pray you observe in them the Apostle's secret Complaint, how in that first and golden Age of the Church (as we may so call it) wherein Christian Vertues did more than ever since flourish in the Clergy (for they were all then either of Christ's own, or of his Apostles own Ordination, who sure were careful what they did in matters of this nature) they did not ignorantly (as in these later days) or rashly lay their Hands upon every body, but only on such, as by the Spirit of discerning they foresaw were likely to prove the best. Now I say, if in those golden Days, we hear and see by the Apostle's Complaint, *in Clero tam raros fuisse verè cordatos & sinceros homines*, that in respect of the others they were as no body to speak on; then doubtless in these leaden, these clayey, and corrupt Days of ours, wherein there are more Men and less Vertue, the Condition is still the same, if not in a degree worse. At least we may (*rebus sic stantibus*, as they do) conclude from the words now, that which might have been concluded then; namely this Doctrine, *It is the Condition of the greater part of the Clergy, to seek themselves more than Christ.*

This is the Proposition: but if you please we will make three of it, thus,

1. Most Ecclesiasticks seek their own.
2. Few seek Christ.
3. None can seek both their own and Christ together: (for Christ and themselves in this respect are always in competition, and St. Paul here makes them *Opposita*.)

* Reverendi Patres & Fratres, non mihi est cordi, auribus istius gentis Laicæ mores nostros hac in re nimis verè flebiles sermone divulgare; Ah utinam potius mores ipsi eorum oculis non nimis divulgarent ipsos! Date copiam igitur obsecro dicendi verbis, quæ nimis nimis factis dicta sunt, & oppugnandi parciter quæ strenue oppugnat Deus: vestrum fateor est, alias alios arguere, nunc vero (ni fallor) huc advenistis, ut ipsi (re urgente) arguamini. Inire rem sanè fateor, & causam, & locum, utrumque gravem, hominem petere me multo gravio-rem, & malle equidem ut impræsentiarum me imberbem discen-tem quam docentem videritis: Sed cum aliter se res habet (auxiliane Deo) officio fungar pro virili, ac eo modo, ut non quæ mea sunt viderer quærere, sed quæ Jesu Christi; favete igitur.

The first Proposition is, Most Ecclesiasticks seek their own. I give it in these terms, because I desire to close with the Apostle as near as I can; and it is plain he here speaks of Ecclesiastical Persons.

But of these there are two sorts, which for want of other words I may call *Directi* and *Collaterales*; so directly, and so only by the by. The first sort I confess are principally here intended by the Apostle, tho' both sorts, as will appear, are too much guilty of *Self-seeking*.

Concerning the first, they are the Ministers of the Gospel, ordain'd and appointed, as *Timothy* and the rest were, to preach Jesus Christ unto the People: now says the Apostle, these *seek their own*.

And there be three Owns which a Minister is said to *seek*; own Ease, own Praise, own Profit. *All seek their own*; that is, there be few Ministers but are guilty of *Self-seeking* in one of these three respects.

First, Some seek their own Ease, and of these in especial are three sorts: whereof the

First are they that will spare no pains, and peradventure no charge, till they have got a Charge; and then, *cum pervenerint ad Curam*, *vivunt sine curâ* (as *Bernard* speaks) when they have obtain'd a Cure, they live most void of Care: they are like the Hawk, who when she hath got her Prey, by filling her Gorge is disabled to fly; or like the *Hetrurian* Idol, which while it stood in the Field, meanly

* Reverend Fathers and Brethren, I take no pleasure in publishing our Miscarriages in this point before the Laity: Would to God they did not too plainly see them with their own eyes! Give me leave therefore, I beseech you, to declare in Words what is already but too much declared by Deeds, and to oppose sparingly those things which God himself opposes most vehemently. At other times, I own, 'tis your part to reprove others; but at this time, I conceive, you are come hither, that your selves, if need be, may be reprov'd. I confess, the Solemnity both of Occasion and Place require a much graver Person for the Undertaking; and truly, for my youth's sake, I had rather now be your Disciple than your Teacher: but since 'tis otherwise, I will by God's help discharge my Duty the best I can, and in such a manner as may show I seek not my own, but the things of Jesus Christ. Attend therefore.

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apparel'd, *Omni crebra dedit populo responsa petenti*; it play'd the Lecturer, it willingly answer'd all Demands; but when it was remov'd, and plac'd in the Temple, and richly adorn'd, *Illicò Divitiis obmutuit illa repertis*, it play'd the Parson, Wealth stopt its mouth, Preferment was an Obstacle to its Oracles: so they. It may be (if their Bellies will give them leave) they will preach once a Fortnight, peradventure it is but once a Month; nay, it may be they will give it quite over, and turn wholly like Lay-Parishioners, and become their Curates most judicious Auditors; they find more ease to see others work than to work themselves: so making the Ministry as a Trade, and themselves as Mechanicks, who will take pains till they are Freeman, and then being set up, work only by their Apprentices.

These I say are the first sort that seek their own Ease, your Non-preaching Ministers, the Belly-gods of the Clergy, those idle Drones, those dumb Dogs; *Ezek. xxxiv. 3. Isa. lvi. 10, 11, 12.* These are harsh Terms I confess, Brethren, but they are Scripture-Phrases, else I durst not use them, therefore pray let them be taken in the better part: they are the first.

The Second sort, and nearest a-kin to the former, are Non-Residents, those vagabond Teachers, that love any place better than their own home; like some People in these parts, that affect any Church better than that which belongs to them. These not only fail in preaching, but also in living as they ought to do; they are not only dumb, but also invisible, neither seen nor heard of their People; peradventure their People shall sometimes hear from them, by the Mediation of a Presentment, if they do but conform to their Practice, in leaving their own Parish-Churches; if they be not more conscionable than themselves, and love home better than they; if they do not love his Curate at his command, better than he doth them at God's command, the loving Shepherd will take order to have his own Flock pounded. *My Sheep know my Voice*, says Christ, *John x. 27.* but so shall not my Sheep know my Voice, says the Non-Resident; for I will not preach unto them, *My Sheep follow me*, says Christ; but so shall not mine follow me, says the Non-Resident; for if they do, I'll have them pounded. Ah, what Wretches are these that will afford neither Doctrine nor Example to conform unto! Doubtless by their own confession, their Lives at least are not Canonical, in that their Manners deserve no imitation. These are they therefore that may be said also to mind themselves in the first rank, Non-Residents.

The Third sort that seek themselves in their own Ease, are the timorous and fearful-hearted Preachers, that cry, *Peace, Peace, when there is no Peace*, *Jer. vi. 14.* that themselves might live in peace. They love the name peaceable, better than conscionable; and therefore they dare not disturb Sin, lest themselves should be disturb'd; they wisely foresee that it is as much as some Mens Tongues are worth, yea, and their Livings too, to trench upon those Evils that keep house with the best Men in the Parish, as they are call'd: And themselves have learnt long ago, when they read the Accidence, that *felix quem faciunt aliena pericula cautum*. While the strong Man keeps the house, all things are in peace, *Luke xi. 21.* and

therefore let St. *James* say what he will, *James* iv. 7. they dare not resist the Devil, lest he should serve them as he did those vagabond *Jews*, *Acts* xix. 13, 16. run upon them, overcome them, and prevail against them. Well, but for all that, it is no true Soldier's part to plead, Good sleeping in a whole Skin; or not to dare to draw in a good Cause, for fear of being beaten: for my part, says the Apostle, if I should do so; *If I should seek to please Men, I were not the Servant of Christ*, *Gal.* i. 10. So he, and so I; and I add this more, If it were not for the hurt of them, I could always desire to have some perverse People in my Parish, for it is one of the best means to put life into the Ministry. Well, but these are the third fort; and so much briefly for them in the first rank, that seek their own Ease.

Those of the Second Rank, are they that seek themselves in Praise; some seek their own Praise: and of these also in special are three forts.

First. They that shew more Eloquence than Power, more Learning than Conscience in their teaching: as ye shall have some come up with their *Latin* and their *Logic* (as the Countryman calls it) and with such Divisions, Distinctions, and Metaphysical Quiddities, that scarce themselves can understand them. Some again will quote you twenty or thirty Fathers and Schoolmen in a Sermon, when peradventure they have scarce set eye on two, but took them upon trust. Others again will have their Sermon half *Greek* and *Latin*, that the common People, that love a-life (many of them) to hear gibberish, might admire them for their Profoundness; as they did him, that for want of *Greek* and *Latin* spake *Welsh* and *Irish* in a Sermon. But, Brethren, let us think well upon it: Is to preach so, think you in conscience, to preach Christ? St. *Paul* accounted those *Corinthians* for vain-glorious, *2 Cor.* 10. that came up with so much coin'd Eloquence; but what would he judge of many in these days, think you, if he should live now, and hear Men come up with their strong Lines, their eloquent Nonsense? or should hear Men martyring a piece of Scripture into so many Logical needless Divisions as some will do; would he not say, think you, they did aim to shew the Strength of their own Brains, the Dexterity of their own Wits? Or if he should have heard Men come up with such a deal of unknown Language, as *Latin*, *Greek*, and the like, or with so many Quotations of Fathers and Schoolmen, do you think he would have commended it? I do not speak, Brethren, but that there is both Time and Place for Men to speak learnedly, if they are able, as in the University, or in such a Place, or on such an Occasion as this is. If I were able to speak learnedly, I think here I should: and I suppose, for some reasons, if a Sermon on such Occasions were made all in *Latin*, it would not be much amiss. But to speak so Scholar-like (as they call it) to a Company of ignorant People, it is for a Man to discover himself to be a vain-glorious Fool, even a plain *Self-seeker*. I remember a word, and I hope I shall never forget it, that my * *Noble Patron* said once to me, when I had play'd the fool in that kind, he came and whisper'd

* *Sir Arthur Capell.*

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in mine ear; 'Truly (says he) I am persuaded they that have 'most *Latin* in the Pulpit, have least in the Schools:' which when I had consider'd upon, and examin'd my self, truly thought I, he says true, they have indeed. Well, these are the first sort in the second Rank: I refer it to the Judgment of any one, if these seek not themselves.

The Second sort that seek themselves in their own Praise, are they that affect Popularity, and would be famous in their Generation, eminent above all their Neighbours; like *Theudas*, *Acts* v. 36. they would fain be somebody, and therefore glory much in seeing themselves follow'd. O it is a fine thing to be tickled in the ear, to be carry'd as it were on the Shoulders of the People, *digito demonstrari*, & *dicier hic est*. Behold the Man, that is he! Yea, and if the People will but follow them in this their humour, to requite them again, they will follow them again in their humours, and that so far, till they are led both out of themselves, and out of their Pulpits; and then would fain come in again, but know not how, for losing their credit (forsooth) with the People! Oh! it is a miserable thing, where the Sheep lead the Shepherd, it is a true ὕστερον προτερον; and doubtless it is ten times better to live (as they call it) under a Bishop's Bondage, than in this lamentable sort, to be fet in the Stocks by the Townsmen. Why, Brethren, God's Service is a perfect Freedom; and without all question, the nearer God the more free: wherefore in God's name let us stand fast in that Liberty wherein we are made free, not intangling our selves in such Yokes of Bondage.

But indeed this Path of *Self-seeking* (or self-losing rather) is a beaten Path; more walk in it than think do. Vain-glory is a secret Sin, it will creep into the best Heart, the best Actions, and will commonly attend the best Gifts: nay, let a Man do well but once, suppose he preach a good Sermon or so, and let him but examine his own Heart, if it be not flesh'd exceedingly with the same, if the very Credit of it doth not strongly put him on to preach more often. For my own part I have found it, when to my own thinking I have done well (tho' haply in another Man's not so, for the Crow's Bird is always fairest in her own eyes;) why, before the words have been scarce out of my Mouth, or I out of the Pulpit, I have felt Vain-glory within, suggesting secretly what Respect and Commendation I have deserv'd to my self; when it may be the next time, God Almighty, by denying a like Assistance, cuts my comb again, that I might know my Glorifying to be but Vain-glorying, soon got soon gone, having lost again in my own conceit what before I thought I had deserv'd. Well, but this shall serve to note out the second sort that seek themselves in their own Praise, they that affect a vulgar Popularity.

Now the Third sort that seek themselves in their own Praise, are they that affect Respect from the People too, but they go another way to procure it; namely, by envying, maligning, despising, and inveighing against those that are (and it may be deservedly too) more eminent and popular than themselves: The Glory of their Fellow-

Labourer is their Disgrace, his Candle dims theirs, his Pains discovers theirs and their Curates Laziness, and they cannot abide it. O if he were obscur'd, then they should shine; if his Light were out, their Negligence would not be seen; if he were not so much follow'd, themselves (as themselves think) should be more regarded. They would be famous too, but how shall they effect it? Not by mending their own Diligence, but by endeavouring the others Silence; not by Prayer to God, not by Study, not by more painful, and frequent, and conscionable Preaching, but by Slandering, by bitter Inveighing, by privy Persecuting, by secret writing to Superiour Powers, and the like.

And surely, Brethren, so it is, they that are most often tax'd of Vain-glory by these Men, do least affect it, and the Taxers themselves are most guilty of it: it may so appear from both sides. First, from the Parties tax'd, who (*ad plurimum*) are Men of more able Gifts, to whom God lends a greater Power to dispense his Word withal; which People perceiving, cannot but more affect them, and desire to hear them (you know, *where the Carcase is, the Eagles will be gather'd*, Mat. xxiv. 28.) which for his part, it may be, the Preacher desireth not, but rather seeks to avoid; and (as some have done) doth haply forbear to preach at that present, when he hath seen People flocking to that purpose.

Nay, and further observe but the manner of such Mens teaching, they seldom press for Respect to Preachers; they know they shall have it if they deserve it, without preaching for it. Honour follows Merit as the Shadow doth the Body, and flies from them that follow it, as appears from the other Parties (the Taxers) who are ever and anon calling for Respect, for Reverence, and Love; which (as the case may be) may lawfully be done, for the Apostle did it, 1 Cor. iv. 1. Gal. iv. 17. yet ordinarily, doubtless, it is purchas'd by a better Tenour, if as to the other it comes by desert without asking.

And besides (as I said) it is their custom of whom I am speaking, to inveigh bitterly against their neighbour Ministers that have more Respect than themselves, and to present their poor People that give it to them: And what doth this secretly infer but *Self-seeking*? For if thou didst truly seek Christ, and didst glory above all things, as thou boughtest, in the Prosperity of his Kingdom, thou wouldst be glad to see it thrive by whosoever is the Builder, and wouldst rejoice in the Fruit of another's Labours, as in thine own, if thine with his did tend to the Service of the same Lord.

Nay, and further, as it is observ'd, those Ministers that are most bitter in complaining in that kind, are such as are either utterly unable to teach profitably themselves, or else are idle Persons, and make no conscience to stir up that Gift which God hath bestow'd upon them. Why man, if thou wouldst keep thy People at home, do not fall a pounding, or presenting of them; nor do thou fall to inveigh against those to whom they resort, for that Course will but drive that further from thee which thy Soul gapes after, namely, Respect and Love. No, but fall thou to work more diligently, study thou more carefully,

carefully, pray thou more fervently, and teach thou more conscionably and profitably, and see what God will do for thee: but if thou followest thine own Courses still, Men will say that thou (tho' covertly) seekest thine own Praise; yea, and thou givest People more just occasion to judge so of thee, than thou canst find to judge so of another. And thus you have seen, as briefly as may be, the second way wherein Ministers seek themselves; namely, in their own Praise.

Come we now to the third way, wherein they seek their own, and that is in Profits; and of these as of the former, are in like manner three sorts.

The First are they that to express their more dislike of Singularity, do hunt after nought but Pluralities, Living upon Living, as many as ye will with a Dispensation; it is not against the Canon, and it may be suspected (as some have said) that would the same Canon as equally permit to have as many Wives, their stretching Consciences would quickly submit to an easy Conformity. The Apostle says, *Let the Minister be the Husband of one Wife*, 1 Tim. iii. 2. Some indeed take it literally, and some mystically for one Church or Congregation, whereunto, as to a Wife, he is betrothed. O but *Paul, Paul*, if that be thy meaning, thou never knewest the Mystery of a Dispensation: What, Man! if we can but be qualify'd, we may hold as many Livings (if we can get them) as we have Fingers and Toes. Yea, and I pray thee what good do thy many Livings do thee? Speak Conscience, speak Practice: Do they make thee seek Christ more earnestly, do they make thee preach more diligently? Surely they ought to do: but observe it when you will, the more bountifully God deals with many of them in this kind, the less work they do him; and should any Day-Labourer deal so with them, they would never endure it. Christ says, *My Kingdom is not of this World*; and it is to be fear'd, that they that receive such Profits and Rewards here, shall be put off when time comes with [*Ye have your Reward*, Mat. vi. 2.] If thou be Christ's Disciple, take up as many Crosses as thou wilt, thou hast good warrant for it, *Luke ix. 23*. but take not up too many Churches, thou wilt find no Scripture for that. Crosses I confess are heavy things, but Churches are far heavier; and besides, Heaven-Gate is a low Gate, a Gate with a low Roof, and Churches you know have high Steeples, and they hinder Men from stooping; they make Men proud, remember that.

But so much for them, the first sort stand in the third Rank, that seek themselves in Profit.

The Second sort art opposite to the former in the Way, but they meet in the End, for they seek themselves too and their own Profits, but it is in shunning of Pluralities; for they will preach against a double Benefice, even to the end they may get a double Living, one from the Church, and another from the Country: for like the Snake on the Hearth, when in their somewhat too small a Being they have got some pretty Warmth by the better Benevolence of the People, then they begin to stir and hiss, to the detriment of them that put this Heat into them; and like those unconscionable *Pharisees* in the Gospel,
Mat.

Mat. xxiii. 4. they lay unsupportable Burdens upon some of their too too unable Shoulders.

A good Benefice (as goes the Report) is propounded to them, and it lies a great way off (it may be in the Confines of *Utopia*) and it goes against their Consciences to hold two Livings in that nature; (for you must understand their Consciences stand crooked the clean contrary way.) Wherefore if they accept of this Proffer (as the want of temporal Sufficiencies doth persuade them) then they must leave their dear and loving People (which they are loth to do) wherefore their advice is crav'd against such a Day, and the matter is refer'd to their weighty Considerations (which proves too too weighty to many of them) and a long Sermon without blushing is made to that purpose, which like *Hosea's* empty Vine, *Hof. x. 1.* brings forth fruit only to it self: for at the time appointed, Advice desir'd is return'd, with that which was more expected, the promise of a larger Contribution, upon condition he will not leave them; whereunto they that have more need to receive, must not refuse to give, however against their power and will (as with grief in secret they are forc'd to confess) lest they should be counted Enemies to the Gospel, Slighters of their Minister, and live like neglected suspected Persons all their days. Now certainly this is the most base, ungodly, and hypocritical kind of *Self-seeking* that is; and without all question, of the two, it is far less offensive in the sight of God to hold two Benefices, if one be not sufficient, than in this base manner to grind the Faces of the Poor. Well, these are the second sort that stand in the third Rank guilty of *Self-seeking* in regard of Profit.

The Third sort are they that load themselves with thick Clay, as the Prophet speaks, *Hab. ii.* I mean, that plunge themselves in multitude of wordly Affairs, unbeseeming their Profession; as Farming, Plowing, or the like, wherein for their own Gain they are so painful, that God's Work must needs be done but slightly, if it be done *ad formam*, whether well or no they pass not. When they have sought themselves in the dirt all the week, on Saturday in the Afternoon they begin to think of seeking Christ, or to speak in their own profane Phrase, then they begin to provide Fodder for their Cattel; or it may be, it is Sunday morning before they go about their Sermon. Peradventure some of their Wits deserve Commendation, but to be sure their Custom deserves no Imitation; for make the best of it, it is to do God's work negligently, and curse be he that doth so, *Jer. xlviii. 10.*

Yea, and mark it, such Men too, as their Heart on the week-days runs wholly after their Covetousness, so for the most part do their Tongues upon the Sabbath; for what are the mainest Points that such Men beat most upon in the Pulpit, but Payment of Tythes, Church-Duties? And plenty of Arguments they can produce for the pressure of this Point; which tho' a modest Man haply hath more cause to use, yet he dares not alledge, lest he should give his People occasion to think, that contrary to *St. Paul's* practice, he sought theirs more than them, *2 Cor. xii. 14.*

It is very true, People's Conscience in tything even every where, is like some Ministers Conscience in preaching, it always comes short of Duty; and yet, Brethren, let us observe it, of all Sins, Preaching is least prevailing against this Sin: for whatsoever the Minister speaks in this case, they will judge to be spoken in his own case; whatever he intends, they will tax him of *Self-seeking*; for it is a point call'd *Noli me tangere*, the very Touch will infect. But to glance in the Pulpit upon the Unconscionableness of People in this kind, is the very next way to spread the Contagion, such are their Natures and Constitutions.

And yet, Brethren, this is a common place, and therefore I may the better speak it; and where there is one Lay-man here, I would there were an hundred for to hear me: but here are the Church-wardens, that for the most part are the Ringleaders to Dishonesty in this kind, the Proverb holding true in them, *The nearer the Church the farther from God*; so soon as they have taken the Oath of Relation to the Church, then will they shew themselves injurious one way or other to the chief Churchman; and the Devil perhaps persuades them they may do it that year by Authority. But as I was saying (and I pray you be pleas'd to mark it, you of the Laity, and tell your Neighbours of it when you come at home) a Minister may and ought to seek that which God and the Law hath allotted him for his Maintenance, and yet be no *Self-seeker*, but may seek Christ in it, and the Souls of you his People in it. I warrant you will not believe this, but I'll make it plain unto you.

First, he seeks Christ in it, for Tythes are call'd God's Portion, *Mal. iii. 8.* The Ministers are but God's Rent-gatherers, and should they fail in their Duty in this kind, we may well foresee by the unconscionable Conditions of Men (who above all things love to cheat God of his Due) that by the next Generation Christ would have cause to take up his old Complaint, *The Foxes have Holes, and the Birds of the Air have Nests, but the Son of Man (Christ Jesus) hath not where to hide his head, Mat. viii. 20.* Therefore in seeking their own Dues, you see they may be said to seek Christ, even to keep him in the Land amongst you.

Then secondly, they in this seek not so much themselves, as they do you their People; for (mark it) wouldst not thou say that that Man did chiefly aim at thy Good, that should bestow all his pains and endeavour to save thee from the Gallows, altho' he should get to himself thereby the Price for the Halter? Why, I tell thee, of all Thefts this is most dangerous and damnable, when thou doest withhold or diminish that which is due to the Ministers of God. Now that the Curse which God threatens, *Mal. iii. 8, 9.* might not fall upon thee, thy Minister looks more narrowly to receive his Dues, and it is a part of his Duty to thee, lest, I say, thou by his Remissness shouldst pull the Curse upon thine own head. And I pray thee what doth he get by it? even the price of a two-penny Halter: for thy Tythes and thy Dues which thou payest to him, are but as of that value] in respect of thy Soul; the whole World is nothing in comparison of that, says Christ, *Mat. xvi. 26,* and I hope thou wilt not deny

it, if thou lovest thy Soul. But indeed, Brethren, this is the truth of it, People do not love their own Souls; it appears in this, of all Men they do not care for him that hath the charge of their Souls, it goes most against the Stomachs of many of them to do him a common Courtesy. Any Lay-Man shall have better dealings with them, and shall receive better Tythes from them (where Lay-men do receive them) than he that hath the Charge of their Souls; yea, any other Minister, any Lecturer, shall have their Affections, and it may be sometimes their Monies too; but their own Pastor that hath the Charge of their Souls, tho' he be never so careful and painful for their Good, shall not get so much as his Dues of them. Nay, which is more strange yet, if a Lecturer doth but turn Pastor, and take the Charge of Souls upon him, it is the very next way to lose many of the People's Loves, which haply before he did enjoy; and this some Lecturers foresee well enough, and therefore refuse to take any such Charge upon them.

But what is the reason that People in this sort affect not him that hath the Charge over their Souls, whenas the Apostle also commands it so expressly, *1 Thess. v. 12.* but even because they do not love their own Souls?

But, Brethren, I would you would but seriously in your retir'd Thoughts think upon that Charge of the Apostle, *Heb. xiii. 17.* and read over with due Consideration that place in the third of *Malachi*, where Tythes are call'd God's Portion, and where the Curse is threaten'd to light upon those that retain them; and a gracious Blessing is promis'd to all the rest of their Substance, to the free, willing, and liberal Prayers of them: I say, if you would but consider well of those two places, it would never go so against your Stomachs to do your Minister a common Courtesy; nor would you ever think ill of him, for looking after that which belongs unto him; nor would you ever put him off with the Riff-raff of your things, as the worst Fleece, the least Sheaf, and the like; nor in your bargaining with him for your Tythes, would you desire to get a drinking Penny (as you call it) by him; which according to the Balance of your own Consciences (if you can) shall be at least half in half: no nor would you ever think you did wrong the Country in giving God his Due in this or that particular: (what will they say, doth he think I'll wrong the Country? pay him Tythes of that or that? no, never while I live) so they set God and the Country at odds: yea, but woe be to thee and thy Country too if God be against thee. I say, Brethren, if you would but seriously, when you are alone, think well of the matter, these things would not be so taxable in you as they are.

But this is only by the way: The third sort of Ministers, I say, that seek themselves in this Rank of Profits, are they that plunge themselves overmuch in wordly Affairs, in respect of their temporal Demesns, and regard especially the Fat and the Fleece; that look so over-scrapingly to their Tythes and Offerings (as too too many there are that exceed the mean both of Discretion and Honesty too in that kind) I say, these are the third sort that seek themselves in their own Profits.

So that, Brethren, consider all these kinds of Men, all these sorts of Ministers, they that seek their own Ease, in not preaching, not residing, in preaching plausibly; they that seek their own Praise, in Ostentation of their Learning and Eloquence, in affecting Popularity, in maligning them that are more eminent than themselves; they that seek their own Profit in hunting after Pluralities, in basely begging Contributions, in giving up themselves more openly to Worldly-mindedness: I say, join all these together, and subtract them out of the general number of the Clergy throughout the Land, and no doubt but the first Proposition will be found true, that the greater part of the Clergy seek their own. Here are nine parts you see, haply I might name more; but I would gladly shew my self as charitable, as I would have my Neighbours conscionable, and leave God the Tenth.

But these be only the Clergy *primi ordinis*, of the first and principal sort. Now if the chief be such, *Hæc si Domini faciunt*, if they that should be most conscionable do thus transgress, *audent non talia fures*, think you? Will not those of the inferior sort be found as guilty? those that we call *Ecclesiastici Collaterales*, because they do *Ecclesiam concomitari*, they depend upon the Church as necessary Evils; tho' evil, yet in some sort necessary: I mean your Ecclesiastical Courtiers, your Proctors, Apparitors, Registers, and the rest (as they are deem'd) of that infamous rank that are (*dæte verbo veniam*) *Dæmoni Comedones*, Fellow-Commoners with the Devil; for like him, they live only upon the Sins of the People, joying (as he doth) in the number of Sins, in the multitude of Presentments.

What shall I say of these, that they seek their own? (sure I should wrong them then.) No, they seek more than their own; for some of their Courts (in regard of some of their Consciences) are as unsatiable as Hell, wherein themselves play the Devil; and if they get a Man in, they will hold him fast, either by right or wrong, till in their kind they have devour'd him.

Had these kind of Harpies appear'd in the world in St. Paul's days, he need not to have deliver'd the incestuous *Corinthian* unto Satan, 1 Cor. v. 5. for had he but put him into their hands, it had been torment sufficient; yea, and like Satan too, they are not only Executioners in their kind, but Accusers also; for to get a Man into their Circles, they will either find faults or coin them: as it was said of *Hannibal*, *Aut viam inveniet aut faciet*, so may it of them; they will either find ways to bring Men into trouble, or invent them, by raising false Slanders, Rumours, or the like, and then forsooth, cite them into their own Courts for a Scandal. Surely if ever it might lawfully be said of any, that they are greater Sinners than other Men, it may be spoken of these; for these are those hellish Hags, or *Lamiae*, that have eyes only to look abroad, to pry out other Mens faults, and make no use of them at their own home; they feed, as was said, of the Devil's Diet, they are even according to his own Tooth; he feeds upon Sin, and so do they, and in this respect they must needs be the greatest Sinners: for as he that lives upon Poison, must needs have a poison'd Body (and it is *Gellius*, I take it, that mentions such a one,

who in this respect poison'd all the Fleas that bit him) so they that in this sort live all upon Sin, must needs be the greatest Sinners, they must needs be the most poisonous Creatures. But these, as I said, are but *Ecclesiastici Collaterales*, the Hangbies of the Church, not principally here intended by the Apostle, and therefore indeed (as not worth naming) let it suffice only thus far by the way to mention them.

And so now I have done with the first Proposition, I have shew'd you that most Ecclesiasticks seek themselves: I come now to the second, which is a necessary Consequent of the former. For if most seek themselves, if nine parts in ten seek their own, then few seek Christ, or the Things of Christ; this follows of necessity, and that is the point: Few seek Christ. I'll only shew you in a word what it is to seek Christ, or the things of Christ, and so come to the next.

The things of Christ, what are they? Why, surely in a word, they are nothing else but the Sheep of Christ, the Souls of Men and Women, these are the things of Christ, which he purchas'd you know with the price of his Blood. Now, the Ministers of the Gospel are Ambassadors for Christ and from Christ, 2 Cor. v. 20. to look to these his Sheep, to gather them together into his Fold, to acquaint him with his Voice, to keep them within his Pastures, to give all possible Care and Tendance to them for their Good. So that to seek the things that are Christ's, is τὸ ἀγείν, *hoc agere*; whatsoever becomes of our selves, or our own matters, to look to this, it is to preach the Word, to be instant in the same, in season and out of season, 2 Tim. iv. 2—5. to reprove, to rebuke when we see cause, to exhort with all Long-suffering, and Doctrine; it is to watch in all things for the spiritual Good of our People, yea, to suffer Adversity for their sakes and the Gospel's, every way making Christ known unto them by the Work of the Ministry. Thus to do, is to seek Christ, and the things of Christ; for thus did *Timothy* seek them, for thus had *Paul* instructed him, as ye may see, 2 Tim. iv. 2, 5. (they are the very Words of the Apostle there) and ye may see it in the verse following this of the Text, that *Timothy* had been obedient to the Apostle's Instructions, as a Son to the Father, so says he of him, (as who say) *he even sought Christ as I taught him; which, says he, none else do, that is, none to speak on (as hath been said) none in comparison, and the reason is, for all seek their own.*

Ay, but may not Men seek their own and Christ's too? O no, Christ and themselves in this respect are always in competition, and St. Paul here makes them *Opposita*: which is the last Proposition of the three to be consider'd.

None can seek both their own things and Christ's together; not their own Ease, nor their own Praise, nor their own Profits, together with the things that are Jesus Christ's. I'll give you a Proof of each particular, and so hasten.

First, We cannot seek Christ and our own Ease together. The Prophet *Ezekiel* (as you know) in Chap. xxxiv. ver. 2. hath these words; *Woe to the Shepherds that feed themselves* (that is, that seek their own Ease.) *Should not the Shepherds feed the Flock?* (says he) inti-

intimating by the word *should*, that these two did not, could not stand together, feeding themselves and the Flock. And the Apostle, *Gal. i. 10.* says expressly, *If I should go about to please Men* (my self, or any other, in seeking my own Ease and carnal Quiet) absolutely, I were not the Servant of Christ.

Secondly, We cannot seek our own Praise and Christ together: see *John v. 44.* *How can ye believe that receive Honour one of another, and seek not the Honour that cometh of God?* Whence we learn, that they can neither believe nor seek God's Glory, that receive Honour to themselves, much less sure can they that seek it.

Thirdly, We cannot seek our own Profits and Christ together; (you know the place) *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon*, *Mat. vi. 24.* and yet more plainly, speaking of a Soldier of Christ, *2 Tim. ii. 4.* *No Man that warreth, intangleth himself with the Affairs of this Life*, because he would please him that hath chosen him for a Soldier; (as who say) he that doth intangle himself, cannot please God, nay doth not desire it: And so briefly you see the Point prov'd. Now for the Use.

Application. As it is sometimes the Death of Sin, so it is the Life of Doctrine. Give me leave therefore to and some of this killing Life to that which hath been spoken.

And, Brethren, I beseech you all by that holy Communion and Fellowship that we have with one another in the Work of Christ, that you would seriously consider of these things; and as you desire that your People should apply unto themselves such Doctrines as you propound unto them, and take unto themselves such Reproofs as come from your Mouths, and do concern them; so do you apply and take to your selves, that which I shall speak, and may concern your particular Persons. Nay, be you well assur'd, that as yourselves shall receive the Word, so shall the Word from your selves be receiv'd.

You are all Strangers to me, I scarce know your Faces, much less your Natures and Conditions; and therefore I neither have aim'd, nor can aim at any of your particular Persons. To hit some, I confess I desire, as no doubt but he did that drew the Bow at a venture, *1 Kings xxii. 2.* and it was a hundred to one, if shooting among the Croud (the Army) he hit not some, tho' who he knew not; it was God's Providence to direct the Arrow into *Ahab's* Breast: So it is twenty to one if in this so great Assembly I hit not some, yea, if I hit not many. The Lord direct my Arrows as he did his, into the bosoms of the most guilty: for undoubtedly, if among the Clergy there be so many sorts of *Self-seekers*, as hath been said, then who dares affirm with *Corah*, *Numb. xvi. 3.* that the Congregation is holy, that this whole Congregation is holy?

You therefore in the first place (pray give me leave to speak in the second Person) you I say that seek your selves in your own Ease, whose Strength is to sit still (as *Isaiab* speaks in another sense, *Isa. xxx. 7.*) that feed not the Flock, but only upon the Flock, *Ezek. xxxiv. 2.* In the fear of God think upon it; How can you without terror read all those Threatnings against idle Shepherds denounc'd

against you by the Prophet *Ezekiel*? Chap. xiii. and xxxiv. How can you without trembling hear that Woe to them that be at ease in *Sion*, proclaim'd by *Amos*? Chap. vi. 1. How dare you by your Practice say after him in the Gospel, *Soul take thine ease*, *Luke* xii. 19. or *Body take thine ease*, when he is gone to Hell before you? Will not Ease slay you in the end? Then *Solomon* is no Man of his Word, *Prov.* i. 32. Did not Ease fit *Moab* for Destruction? Doth not *Jeremy* say, Chap. xlviii. 11. that that was the cause she settled upon her Lees? Is not to be given up to one's own Ease, to be given up to one's own self, to one's own Heart's Lust? And did you ever read of any such a one, that was freed from himself again, till the Devil freed him? We read of some that were deliver'd up to Satan, that were freed again, as was *Job* in one kind, *Job* ii. 6. and the incestuous *Corinthian* in another, *1 Cor.* v. their Spirits were sav'd notwithstanding in the Day of the Lord Jesus, *2 Cor.* ii. but you never read of a Man that was deliver'd to himself, but went to Hell. Now for a Man to be given up to his own Ease, I say, is to be given up to his own self, even over to the very highest kind of Impiety, to sit in the Seat of the Scornful, which of three degrees is the highest, as we gather from *Psal.* i. 1. For you may see what the Prophet says in another place, *Psal.* cxxiii. 4. (says he) *Our Soul is exceedingly fill'd with the scorning* (of whom) *of them that be at ease.* And, Brethren, is it not so? Have ye any such Scorners, Flouters, and Gibbers of painful Preachers, and of Sermon-hunting (as they scoffingly term them) or rather more truly of Heaven-hunting People, as those idle, lazy, non-preaching Ministers? But *derisores Deus ipse deridet* (says the Wiseman, *Prov.* iii. 34.) yea, he will laugh at their Calamity, and mock when their Fear cometh, *Prov.* i. 26.

Be wise now therefore, O ye Ministers; be painful, O ye Benefic'd Men; lest by taking to your selves too much liberty, you be given up to your own Liberty, and so become in the end the Objects of God's Derision. O I beseech you by those Mercies of God which your selves have tasted above other Men (I'll put my self into your number, as I have good cause) I beseech you, I say, let us be careful that these receiv'd Mercies breed not our future Miseries; but while our Wages are greater than our Fellow-Labourers, let us (if it may be) exceed them in our pains-taking, lest it fare with us as it did sometime with the *Israelites*, (*Psal.* cvi. 15.) God having granted our Request for our Bellies, we have Leanness therewithal sent into our Souls. If we remember well the Apostle's words, *2 Thess.* iii. 10, *He that will not labour, must not eat*; we would never conceit that God gives us Food to lie still; or if he doth, it is to that end, as Men feed their Swine, to fit them for the Slaughter. O, while we may therefore, let us think upon it. Is not *well done good and faithful Servant*, *Mat.* xxv. 21. a more pleasing word than *you idle and unprofitable*? ver. 30. *Will not enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord*, found more sweet than *throw him into utter Darknes*? Will it not be a heavy hearing, when Christ shall urge, *Why stood thou all the Day idle*? *Mat.* xx. 6. when he shall bid *remember how thou in thy life-time receivest thy pleasure*? *Luke* xvi. 25. Well, Brethren,

Brethren, for the Love of Christ let us think on these things, and drive Ease betime from our luskish sinful Bodies, that we may partake of that Promise, *Psal. xxv. 13. His Soul shall live at ease*; that we may have cause to say at the last day with the Son of Syrach, *Eccclus. li. 37. Modicum laboravi & inveni mihi multam requiem.*

And you that have not yet these Occasions to be idle, I mean Lecturers, Curates, and the like, that (it may be) more thro' the Idleness of the Pastors, than out of your own due Worth, do glean away the Affections of the People; take you heed that hereafter when your Table is set, it doth not in like sort prove a Snare unto you, as it doth to many others. You may haply for the present inveigh bitterly against them that are guilty in this kind, and hereafter be condemn'd your selves *de eodem crimine*: Let him that thinketh he stands take heed lest he fall, *1 Cor. x. 12.* For it is not Poverty (as the common Vote goeth) but rather Plenty, that proves the Man. *As the fining Pot to the Gold, and the Furnace to the Silver, so is a Man according to his Dignity,* says wise Solomon, *Prov. xxvii. 21.* But so much for the first.

Now for the second sort. You that are Non-Residents, that neither feed your Flock, nor know your Flock, what shall I say to you? You are like the good Shepherd in no respect, for you neither know yours, nor are known of yours: *The Thief comes not but to steal,* says Christ, *John x. 10.* speaking of the false Shepherds: so you come not but to take that Wages you never earn'd. Again, he speaks in the same Chapter, *ver. 8.* of some that came before him, that were Thieves and Robbers; and he adds, *The Sheep did not hear them*; it may be said of you that come after him, your Sheep do not hear you: Verily you are worse than the Hireling there mention'd, *ver. 12, 13.* for he flees not till he sees the Wolf come, but you flee before-hand, to give occasion to his coming. It was the Hireling's Fault in Christ's time, not to care for the Sheep, but now it is the Fault of our chief Shepherds. *He cares not for the Sheep* (says Christ) *because he is an Hireling*; but if Christ were here now, he must turn his note, and say, he cares not for them because he is their Shepherd.

Sure you know [*Shepherd*] is a relative Word, and must confess his *Correlatum*, and so no doubt but you will do; you will not deny that you have a Living, but withal you have a Rule, which you learnt when you were Fresh-men, and make more use of it now than you did then, and that is this; *Distantia non tollit Rationem.* But by your Favour, that Rule is not *ἡ ἀπόστασις*, for *non tenet in Sacris.* But however, what say you to [*Pastor*] then? that infers a Presence: and for the word [*Watchmen*] to be sure that forbids Non-Residence.

Well, Brethren, the day will come, when you shall hear the Voice, *Reddite Rationem villicationis vestrae*, *Luke xvi. 2.* How you will be able to say, Of them thou hast given us in charge, we have lost none, I know not; *John xvii. 12.* Nay, see you to it, if ye shall not rather have cause to say, Of them thou hast given us in charge, we have look'd to none. Certainly of all Men you have cause to
fear

fear a *Nescio vos*, Mat. vii. 23. as a due Reward to a *Nescio Oves*. Wherefore for your own sakes, while you have time, do as the Apostle bids, *Feed the Flock of Christ* that depends upon you, 1 *Pet.* v. 2. Nay, remember but what Christ said to *Peter*; *Peter* (says he) *lovest thou me? then feed my Sheep*, John xxi. 17. *Probatio dilectionis est exhibitio operis.*

And for you in the third place, that preach plausibly to live peaceably, that seek Ease by Soothing; you faithless, unfaithful, faint-hearted Preachers, you are in the esteem of God's Spirit a Generation of the vilest Men, for you are call'd, *Isa.* ix. 15. *the Tail of the People*. The Prophet that teacheth Lyes is the Tail; and you teach Lyes, when you dawb with your untemper'd Mortar, *Ezek.* xiii. 10. when you promise to the rotten and unhumbl'd Souls of Men Life and Peace, when terrible things are at hand, even Garments roll'd in Blood, devouring Flames, and everlasting Burnings; *Isa.* ix. 5. *Isa.* xxxiii. 14. Assuredly it will little avail you at the last Day to say, *Have not we preach'd in thy Name?* Mat. vii. 22. for you are (if not Enemies) at least Disdainers of the Cross of Christ, *Phil.* iii. 18. *Gal.* 6. 12. Your preaching in his Name is to little purpose, unless it be sometime with his Cross upon your Shoulders; they preach best in Christ's name, that preach by Sufferings.

I pray, Brethren, let us lay it to our hearts: We in a special manner have taken the Lord's Prefs-Money, when we were ordain'd into the Ministry, and therefore bound to go to war; yea, and to bid defiance to the whole World, inasmuch as St. *John* says it lies all in wickedness, 1 *John* v. 19. *Bellum* (you know) in *Latin* signifies both War and Good; and sure in this they go both together, no War without, no Good within, free from Opposition, void of Goodness. We can never play the parts of right Soldiers or valiant Captains, but when the Enemy is about our Ears. We are never to any purpose laying siege to Heaven, but when we are suffering Violence; *And the Violent take it by force*, says our Saviour, Mat. xi. 12. not the plausible. No, we cannot upon sufficient grounds think that we are rightly sowing God's Pearls, unless some Dogs turn again and rend us, Mat. vii. 6. that we are of *Jeremiah's* perfect stamp, unless we be accounted contentious, *Jer.* xv. 10. that we are true *Ezekiels*, unless the Scorpions bite us, *Ezek.* ii. 6. or like *David*, Men after God's own Heart, unless the Lions roar upon us, *Psal.* lvii. 4. that we are any of God Almighty's Lambs, unless our Habitation be among the Wolves, Mat. x. 16. What! Christ's Sheep must bear Christ's marks; *I bear in my Body the Marks of the Lord Jesus*, says the Apostle, *Gal.* vi. 17. and what are they but Railings, Revilings, Oppositions, Chains, (if need be) and Imprisonments? *Acts* xxviii. *For the Hope of Israel's sake*, says the Apostle, *I am bound with this Chain*. Yea, and he was as proud (if we may use that word) of that his Iron Chain, *Col.* i. 24. as the best Alderman in *London* of his Chain of Gold; and more reason he had for it. And the Apostle commends *Onesiphorus* for this, that he was not ashamed of his Chain, 2 *Tim.* i. 16. And doth it become us to be afraid of its chinking? We read of *John the Baptist*, how he preach'd his Head off, Mat. xiv. 11. he

he preach'd so long against the Sins of the great ones, till his Head was sent in for a second Course. And our Saviour himself preach'd so long and so plainly against their Sins, till they ston'd him out of the Pulpit, *John* viii. 59. yea, he spake so home into the Bosoms of the Scribes and Pharisees, that were (as you are) the Teachers of others, that the Text says in another place, *They perceiv'd that he meant them*, *Mat.* xxi. 45. *Luke* xx. 19. And he that is truly Christ's, must follow him: *Ye have me for an Example*, says he, *John* xiii. 15. yea, and God promises us, *Jer.* i. 18, 19. he will make us as Iron Pillars, and Walls of Brass, that tho' Men oppose, they shall not prevail against us. Nay, there is no better way to get Respect and Esteem to our Persons, than Faithfulness and Impartiality in this kind: *He that rebuketh a Man shall find more favour in the end than he that flattereth*, says wise Solomon, *Prov.* xxviii. 23. And the Apostle charges Titus to look to it, that no Man despise him; prescribes him this Course among the rest, *to rebuke with all Authority*, *Tit.* ii. 15. Nay, the Lord says to the soothing Priests, *Mal.* ii. 9. *I have made you despised, and vile before all the People, because you have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the Law.* And look about you, what Preachers are most affected and follow'd, what do People go out of their Parishes for to see? *Reeds shaken with the Wind*, *Mat.* ii. 7. to hear those that are timorous and fearful? No, but such as like *John the Baptist*, *Luke* i. 17. come in the Spirit of *Elias*, as resolute as he was when he came to *Abab* in the second Person; *It is thou and thy Father's House that troubleth Israel*, *1 Kings* xviii. 18. So *John* to *Herod*, *It is not lawful for thee to have thy Brother's Wife*, *Mat.* xiv. 4. Therefore, Brethren, as the Apostle adviseth, *1 Cor.* xvi. 13. let us be careful to quit our selves like Men, like Captains, and not like Cowards, among the People over whom God hath set us: for as concerning others that are beyond our reach, Kings, Magistrates, Bishops, Governours, or the like, to meddle with them or their Sins (unless we are call'd to speak before them) for ought I know it is beyond our Commission. But I say towards them that are under our Charge, let us prove our selves to be of the Truth (as Christ did) by not regarding their Persons in our preaching: *Master* (say they) *we know that thou art of the Truth, and teachest the way of God truly*, *Mat.* xxii. 16. How did they know it? why, *thou carest not for Man* (say they) *neither considerest the Person of Men;* namely, in thy teaching. Let us bear in mind, the Fearful are in as bad a case as the Unbelievers; yea, as Murderers, Whoremongers, Sorcerers, and Idolaters: for all shall have a part together in the Lake, *Rev.* xxi. 8. In a word, remember but that Woe to them that sow pillow under Mens elbows, *Ezek.* xiii. 18. that Woe of God is more insupportable than the Malice of all Men.

And now in the fourth place, you that seek your selves in Praise, by a learned and unintelligible kind of Preaching, that by your Cookishness in your Sermons, as by forc'd Sauces, do take away the wholesome Relish from the good Word of God; when you follow these Courses, you do in a special manner lay open your selves not only

only to be vain-glorious, but very foolish, if you think your gawish Flourishes can add any more Excellency to the Majesty of God's Word, than a painted Face can add Commendation to an honest Woman, No, Brethren, the Word of God, when it is most naked in it self, is then most mighty in Operation, most keen and cutting, and our Art doth but take away its edge. And this the Apostle was well aware of, when he came to the *Corinthians* not with the inticing Speech of Man's Eloquence, but with the plain Evidence of the Spirit and of Power, 1 *Cor.* ii. 4. The Word of God, you know, is said to be as a *two-edged Sword*, Heb. iv. 13. Now if you would have your Sword cut, you must unsheath it; not put it into a sheath, but make it naked and bare; for then it will be most sharp and piercing.

Brethren, I confess it is a hard thing for a Man to deny himself in this: Our Religion for the most part lies more in the Head than it doth in the Heart; and that is the reason that our Preaching for the most part is more heady than hearty: yea, but if we would have it go to the Heart, we must have it come from the Heart. If we sincerely covet to make our People good Christians, we must not mind to shew our selves great Scholars, for then God will not bless our Labours. *Mark* iv. 33. It was said of our Saviour, that he preach'd not as himself was able to speak, but as they were able to hear; and therefore it is said in another place, *The common People heard him gladly*, *Mark* xii. 37. So must we, Brethren, if we will be like Christ, and seek the Good of our People, descend to their Capacities, be plain that we may be profitable, and always pray that we may have the Evidence of the Spirit, that we may be powerful, for this will bring a Man peace at the last; this Course shall be rewarded with a *well done good and faithful Servant*, *Mat.* xxv. 21. In a word, remember what is said, 2 *Cor.* x. 18. *not he that commendeth himself is approv'd, but he whom the Lord commendeth.*

Well, in the fifth place, you that seek your selves in Popularity, in affecting to be follow'd, you Rural Gods, you *Pans* of the Country, that Pope-like do covet to over-top all your Brethren; what have you above others, that you have not receiv'd? 1 *Cor.* iv. 7. Why then do you glory as if you receiv'd it not? as if you by your own Power and Authority had made these or these Men whole, had converted such or such? *Acts* iii. 12. Why should *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*, sound so sweetly in your ears? *Acts* xix. 28. What will *Vox Populi* do you good, when you are raked up in the dust? It may lift you up for the present, and yet clap you under hatches in the end: If you take, commonly (with the fish) you are also taken; nor do you more rob your Fellow-Ministers of Love, than you do your selves of Liberty. Your Humour of all others is a most dangerous Humour, and so much the more dangerous, because so pleasing to Nature. It puffeth up, it causeth you to despise your Fellow-Labourers, and to be to them-ward too too full of domineering; yea, and it occasioneth Neglect to them from others, and much ill-will from them unto your selves; nay, it oft-times takes away the Authority

rity from the Word of God: for (with the People) that relisheth well from no Man's Mouth, but such as yours, to whom they are devoted; what you say is their Scripture, *ipse dixit*, he holds it, that's enough, and he must needs err from the Truth (in their deem) that contradicts it.

Ah, Brethren, that we had but Hearts to consider these Inconveniences, and to remember that we are not for our selves, but are all Fellow-Labourers for one and the same Master; and therefore for the Work-sake we should strive to maintain the Credit of one another, especially with their own People, and be more afflicted to see our Neighbour-Minister forsaken, than affected to see our selves follow'd: for when he is forsaken, there is a Fault either in him or them, and we should grieve at the Faults of all. If we mark but the Apostle's Custom, we shall see how careful every where he was to maintain the Credit of his Fellow-Ministers: tho' they were inferior to him in Gifts, yet he did not affect to bear away the Bell from them. We may see in the Epistle to the *Colossians*, Chap. iv. 7. 12. how he calls *Tychicus* and *Epaphras* faithful Pastors, and commends them exceedingly to their own People, (for indeed a Man may be faithful in the Exercise of two Talents, as well as in the Exercise of five, *Mat. xxv. 21, 23.*) And so in this Chapter of the Text, *Phil. ii. 20, &c.* how doth he commend *Timothy* and *Epaphroditus* to the *Philippians*, to whom they were appointed Preachers? *ver. 25-----30.* O Brethren, if we would but do so too, I dare say God Almighty would con us thank for it; for so should we further one another in his Work, and not hinder one another as we do.

And I would also that you in the sixth Place would in a special manner consider this, you black-mouth'd Ministers, that are so brimfull to the very Mouth of Envy and Pride, that to empty your selves you are fain to go a backbiting in secret of them that are more worthily famous than your selves, to spit out your filthy Venom against their harmless and well-deserving Persons, when you see the People resorting to them. I say, I would you would think upon this: for I pray, how do you rejoice at the Good they do, when you so malign them? How do you seek Christ, when you fret at the Faithfulness and Painfulness that is us'd in his Service? You would like *Magnus*, *Acts viii. 18.* be famous too; but with him you reap nought but Disgrace by these courses, and a further Possibility of Hell to come. Have ye not mark'd the Story of the Viper? *Acts xxviii. 3, 4, 5, &c.* Why, that is the very Emblem of one of you. The Text says, *ver. 3,* there came a Viper out of the Heat, and leap'd upon *St. Paul's* Hand, (now you must understand by the way, that *St. Paul* was the honestest Man in all the Company) now when the Barbarians saw this, they presently concluded *St. Paul* was a Murderer, one whom Vengeance would not suffer to live. But after a while, *St. Paul* shakes the Viper into the Fire, and himself remain'd whole and sound; which when the People saw, they presently chang'd their Note, and said *St. Paul* was a God.

So these venom-mouth'd Wretches, like that Viper, out of the heat of their Malice lay hold on the best and honestest Men, endeavouring to kill them with their empoison'd Tongues. Now when the Bishops and others that be not acquainted with the true Conditions of these Men, hear these things of them, they presently censure them, as the Barbarians did *Paul*, to be naughty and wicked Men: yea, but let them stay a while, and they shall see the Vipers only to fall into Hell-fire, and the other remaining harmless and innocent, shall be known to all to be good Men, and Men of God. You that be guilty of these things, I pray you take them to your selves, and see unto them.

In the next Place, you that seek your selves in your own Profits, there be three sorts of you, I will shut you up altogether (because I begin to grow tedious to my self, and I fear much more to some of you:) In a Word, you plainly discover that your Pains for Christ is little worth, in that you look for a Reward in this World. True Virtue (says a Heathen Man) scorns to expect, or look after an earthly Crown. Our Saviour tells us, *That his Kingdom is not of this World*, John xviii. 36. and why, that his Disciples might not (as you do) think of Greatness or Riches here. I pray, what became of your Forefather *Demas* that forsook *Paul*, to embrace this present World? *2 Tim.* iv. 10. The Text says he went to *Thessalonica*, and *Dorotheus* says, he became an Idol-Priest there; and no marvel if he proves the Devil's Priest, that was Mammon's Chaplain. *Covetousness*, says the Apostle, *1 Tim.* vi. 10. *is the Root of Evil*, which while some lusted after, *they erred from the Faith, and pierced themselves through with many Sorrows: But thou, O Man of God*, says he, *shun these things*. So say I to you, O Men of God, shun these things, you above all Men, because you are Men of God; because Christ (in a special manner) *hath chosen you out of the World*, John xv. 19. therefore it becoms not you above all to mind the things of this World: Because you are the Salt to season others, *Mat.* v. 13. above all it becomes not you to be unsavoury; because you must preach against Covetousness, of all others it becomes not you to be covetous: You must help to draw up other Mens Affections to the things above, therefore it becoms not you to have your Affections intangled upon the things below. With what face can you preach the Doctrine of Faith, when you your selves are so incredulous as not to trust God for the matters of this Life, whenas himself hath so expressly said, *He will be Levi's Portion?* Deut. x. 9. Doubtless the cause that many Ministers Children come to Penury and Misery, is not for that their Parents left them so little, but because they left them so much; namely, besides the Lord, if not rather without the Lord: they were not so careful to leave the Lord their Portion, as to leave them a Portion of Wealth. Ah, says Christ, *Mat.* vi. 33. seek the Kingdom of Heaven, and all things necessary shall be supply'd, (namely, to thee and thine:) Preach the Word diligently and impartially, and God will provide for thee; the Ravens shall feed thee, as they did

Elias,

Elias, 1 *Kings* xxvii. 4. that is, the very carrionly Wretches of the World shall help to sustain thee; God hath their Hearts in his hand, and he shall make them do it. Ah, Brethren, that we would but all resolve to be at the Lord's finding, and to take only that which God shall work for us, and cast upon us, without our seeking or suing for, by any other means than following our Callings; tho' we have but a little, we shall have more Content in it, than others have in a great deal: *A little that the Righteous hath, is better than great Riches of the Ungodly*, *Psal.* xxxvii. 16. O Brethren, how the Lord's hand doth sweeten a Blessing, over any hand doth whatsoever! I praise my God (I can say it) I take not so much comfort in what I have, as I do in this, that God gave it; it was his only working, *Deus nobis hæc otia fecit*.

Or howsoever (Brethren) howsoever, should God defer our Pay till our Day be done; yet then we shall have it heap'd up and running over; we shall be the first of all that shall receive our Reward, *Rev.* xi. 18. and our Wages shall be great too, *Mat.* v. 12. *Great is your Reward in Heaven: And they that turn many to Righteousness, shall shine as the Stars for ever and ever*, says the Prophet *Daniel*, Chap. xii. 3. And doubtless let us think this, the more Reward we have before-hand, the less shall we have hereafter.

Wherefore, Brethren, I beseech you, let us not shew our selves to be of the number of them that *St. Paul* speaks of, 2 *Cor.* ii. 17. that make merchandize of the Word of God; take heed of *Aurum*, lest it prove *Tholoffanum*; remember how *Judas's* Bag burst him, and *Dives's* Wealth damn'd him. To seek after Wealth and Promotion in this kind, is to follow the Error of *Balaam*, as *St. Peter* and *St. Jude* say, 2 *Pet.* ii. 15. *Jude* 11. and Riches in this kind are call'd *the Wages of Unrighteousness*; And if you mark it in a Clergyman, to the word *Lucre* is always filthy annex'd; *Feed the Flock of Christ, not for filthy Lucre*; 1 *Pet.* v. 2. 1 *Tim.* iii. 3. *Tit.* i. 11.

And away with that damn'd Usury, that gets so much strength by the Practice of some of the Clergy: nay, some amongst us have got a trick, but it is of the Devil's teaching, to go beyond God Almighty's reach (as they think) in putting out their Monies: they have invented a new way, which he never thought on; they will put out 20 *l.* to have 30 or 40 *l.* paid them for it by equal Payments in six or seven Years space (or after that fashion, I know not the particulars.) But if Usury it self be a Sin, when God will endure to be mock'd, then this Trick will hold bottom.

And you of the Clergy that are Landlords, and have Grounds or Houses to let, I would you would be asham'd of your selves for your unconscionable griping and handling of People in this kind; to be sure others are asham'd of you, when they hear poor Folk putting it into their private Litany, *From being a Clergyman's Tenant, good Lord deliver us*.

And you, my Brethren, that have wherewithal to keep Houses, be liberal, be hospitable: The Apostle, 1 Tim. iii. 2. says it is part of the Office of a Minister *to be given to Hospitality*. Nay, think this without question, whatsoever we have from the Church, more than is sufficient for our selves and Families, of right belongs to the Poor; yea, and further, if we have wherewithal, and do not preach with our Hands as well as with our Tongues, we shall make but a poor work on it. And let me add this, assuredly there neither is nor can be any such inward Pleasure or sweet Content to the Mind, as to see a poor Man cry for joy at the receipt of an unexpected Two-pence, or Three-pence, when he begs but for an Half-penny.

And you of the Clergy that are so politick in the Affairs of this World, as many of you be, pray remember that Saying, *The Wisdom of this World is foolishness with God*, 1 Cor. i. 20. And therefore the more wise you grow in worldly matters, the more foolish you grow to God-ward: and indeed if you mark it, these Ministers for the most part that are most able to give advice in worldly matters, are commonly the easiest Preachers and the poorest Divines; and on the other side, the Proverb holds true, *The greatest Scholars are none of the wisest Men*.

But verily I am persuaded this Sin of Worldliness in many Ministers shall be requir'd at the Parishioners Hands; for if they were not so full of Fraud, and Cozenage, and unjust Dealing, but would pay the Ministers their Dues honestly and quietly, they would never be driven so to look after them, or to study the Law to know their own.

And therefore (my Brethren of the Laity) pray let me lose a few more words among you before I go: You complain that your Ministers are covetous, and close, and nigh, and shrewd Men for the World; you may thank your selves for it, you make them so: for if you had but so much honesty as to pay unto God the things that are God's, that they are intrusted to look to, they would mind their Books more, and the World less.

But you would have your Ministers keep a good House, and feast you all over from one end of the Town to the other; and in requital of his Kindness, you will cast all the Burden of the Poor upon his neck if you can, and very mannerly spare your own Purfes, and cozen him of half his Dues beside; and when your Consciences begin to croke, and to grumble at your so doing, you can stop their mouths with your new-found distinction, that you allow him as much as the Tenth of the Grounds comes to, that is, according to the Rent you pay for the Land; but he shall not have the Tenth of your Labours: and therefore you will pay your selves for them, you will steal from him so much as shall pay for the Tenth of plowing, and harrowing, and reaping and mowing, for Horse and Man and all; and this you think you may do, and with this cheating Distinction for the present you stop the mouths of your Consciences. But (by your favour) if this were honest dealing, then God Almighty was much to blame, when he commanded the People

ple not only to pay, but also to bring their Tythes to *Jerusalem*, in that he did not withal command the Priests to allow them somewhat back again for their Labours. No, no, but your Wisdom comes from a deeper bottom than God Almighty's did; it comes from Hell, and to Hell it will carry you.

But you (my Brethren of the Clergy) when you hear any of your Parishioners nibbling upon this Distinction, cross him in your Books for a cheating Knave; for I warrant you he hath cozen'd you already, or he means to cozen you.

And, my Brethren, we shall do well to look to it, and prevent a Danger before it comes; for doubtless these *inconfionabiles Coloni* do intend to bring Ministers to take their Tythes according to the Rents of their Lands, and not according to the Fruits of their Lands: yea, and let a Man but for quietness sake yield unto them once, you shall have them come the next year and complain they have a hard bargain, and then you shall not get so much; and so in the conclusion it will come to this pass, we shall get nothing at all.

Ah, but my Brethren (you of the Laity) have a care of your Souls for all that, you had best, and exprefs the same in loving your Ministers, and in paying them their Dues, that they may be encourag'd to have a care of your Souls too, as of the things of Jesus Christ. You have a Condition among you, but it is a very ill-favour'd one, you will not above all do your Minister a Courtesy, for fear of raising a custom; no, you will scarce be conscionable some of you, for fear of bringing it into a custom; and you think it a great Credit to your selves to be the Maintainers of a Town-Faction against your Pastors. O, no doubt but it will be very sweet and comfortable unto you, when you lie upon your Death-beds; yea, and if you have never a foot of Land in the Town of your own, so much the more comfortable. O but, Brethren, in sober sadness let me tell you, it will be but poor comfort when sad Death shall lay his cold claws upon you, to summon you to the Judgment-Seat of him whose Servants and Stewards you have oppos'd. No, no, but believe it, it will be more comfortable if you can remember that you have always been in love and peace, and friendship with your Minister, and have never been failing to do him any Courtesy, because he is the Messenger of God for your good, nor did you ever desire to get any thing from him but Grace and Knowledge. Surely, Brethren, these Thoughts will be more comfortable than the other; wherefore if you desire peace upon your Death-beds, think on these things before-hand: And so I have done also with you.

And now in the last place of all, you Courtiers, you will one day lie upon your Death-beds too (for Lawyers also die) and you will hear a *Reddite rationem villitatis vestrae*, render an account of all your dishonest doings. You look (I warrant you) to see a great many Presentments to day; yea, but when you see them, and look upon them, I would have you but think thus with your selves,

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The time will come when we our selves shall be presented, our own Consciences shall make the Bill, and the Devil shall play the Churchwarden to put it in: I would you would think thus, I say, when you are taking and looking upon your Presentments; for it may be, the thought of it may do you some good; it may make you careful in some sort to punish Sin (as your place requires) and not so altogether (as may be noted) to take Money. For if an Adulterer, or an unclean Person be put into your Court, if he hath Money you will vouchsafe to look upon him; if he hath enough, Pope-like you will sell him a Pardon: if but a little, yet for that little sake you will deign him an Order of Penance: but if he hath none (I speak upon some grounds) then he comes off (for ought we see) clearly, not a word more as we hear is spoken to him, and we that are his Ministers (in the mean time) dare not admit him to the Sacrament, lest our selves should come into danger, lest you should lie to get us into your lurches. Now is this right? Is this Honesty? Is this according to the will of God, think you? Nay, is this the mind of our Governours that permit you in your Offices? No, I believe it is not, but you wrong them, you abuse us, and you offend God, and injure and defame our Church most of all. And I am persuaded, did they (I mean our Bishops and the rest) that have put you in your places, but know as much of you in matters of this nature as God knows, they would not be so long-suffering as he.

Nay, let me add this; I think verily if you were but as conscionable in punishing Sin and Evil (as your place requires) as you seem to be unconscionable in taking Monies, your Gain would be much more than it is, and where you have one Presentment, you would have three or four; for I am persuaded many Ministers had rather suffer some wrong at their People's hands, than put them into your hands, you are so tedious and griping in your dealings with them. For my own part, it was in my mind to have presented some two or three matters, but partly upon these Considerations I have forbore, and I believe some of my Brethren have been sometime of the same mind; so that if you would but do as you ought to do, you should get more by us than you are like to get, and besides your Gettings would be attended with God's Blessings, and your Souls might haply go to Heaven in the conclusion. Wherefore be requested for your own sakes to look sometimes upon your own selves, and think sometimes upon your Dealings, and present sometimes your own Sins, with Sorrow, Tears, and Confession before the Lord's Eyes, you may save the Devil a labour at the last day.

Thus, Brethren, I have held you longer than I thought I should; but if you well consider, I had many sorts to speak unto; and to speak to every one a little, I could speak no less. And now I make no question, but with *Sampson* I have pull'd a House upon mine own head; I mean much secret dislike and evil-will from every body
for

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for my Plainness: but if I have, it is no more than I fore-expected; and as *Sampson* did, if with my self I slay or wound the Guilty, I care not: I say with him, *Judg. xvi. 30. Let me lose my Life* (my Credit, my Esteem or what you will) *with the Philistines*, I am contented. And if my Conscience could but tell me, that in every Action I ever did, in every Sermon I ever preach'd, I had as truly fought Christ, as it suggests unto me I have desir'd to do in this; I would boldly conclude with that *Simeon* in the Gospel, *Luke ii. 29. Lord, now let thy Servant depart in peace.* And so farewell.

Gratia & Gloria Deo, & Christo Jesu, & adjutori meo. Amen.

*Preach'd by that zealous Royalist
Edward Symonds, Minister of
Rayne in Essex, April 12. 1632.*

F I N I S.

12. 1. 1942. 10. 1942. 10. 1942. 10. 1942.

I have been thinking of you very much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you. I have been thinking of you very much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you.



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